

Employees' Perception towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives of Ethiopian Brewery Industry

Fentaye Kassa Hailu

Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing Management College of Business and Economics,
University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia

Abstract

The relationships that a business has with the society have been discussed by several scholars for decades in the context of corporate social responsibility and stakeholder theory. The idea of stakeholder as a central tenant in CSR involves ethical and organizational practices where corporations bear the responsibility of their impact on all organizational stakeholders; this, in turn, determines societies' desire to legitimate business practices. The main objective of the study is to examine the perception of employees toward CSR initiatives of the brewery industry in Ethiopia. For the study purpose, a cross-sectional research design and survey method was employed. Convenience sampling technique was used to select participants and collected primary data from a total of 429 employees of major five brewery firms. The result of study indicated that the perception of employees, customers, community and environmental aspect of CSR and the overall perception of CSR initiatives of brewery firms were above average but, the least mean score was registered to employee aspect of CSR. Therefore, companies that choose to implement CSR approach must emphasize on employees' aspect of CSR first and other stakeholder groups afterwards since the success and failure of firms, including CSR implementation are largely depend on commitment, and motivation of employees.

Key words: CSR, Ethiopian Brewery, Employee Perception, Stakeholder

1. Introduction

Every business enterprise operates within a given society and the relationships that a business has with the society have been discussed by several scholars in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR hereafter) and stakeholder theory for decades. For example, Wood and Jones (1995) suggested that business and society are interwoven rather than being distinct entities. Despite the current popularity of both CSR and stakeholder approach, there is still no general accepted definition of either "CSR" or "Stakeholder". CSR has been conceptualized in a number of several ways which are related to different views regarding the role of business in society (Lantos, 2001). The present conception of CSR gives more accentuation on company's responsibilities to multiple stakeholders. Despite the fact that there are many dimensions of CSR, the stakeholder engagement must at the core (Smith, 2003), thus the basic idea of CSR is that business corporations have an obligation to work toward meeting the needs of a wider range of stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995). Moir (2001) contended that the way in which the requirements of organizational stakeholders may be met within the CSR framework are numerous and include; treating employees fairly, carrying out business operations with integrity, respecting the human rights of all individuals, sustaining the environment for future generations as well as demonstrating concern for neighboring communities.

This study has chosen to focus on employees, as Rodrigo & Arenas (2008) suggest that CSR initiatives can be better understood from an employee's perspective. Their CSR perceptions are more precise; they are well-informed and are often involved in CSR initiatives by actively participating. Employees as a stakeholder group perceive, evaluate, judge and respond to CSR programs and initiatives (Rupp et al., 2006; Wood and Jones, 1995). In the Freeman's stakeholder model (1984, 2004) employees represent one of the several other stakeholder group addressing the company with their own demands. Employees can also be assumed as playing a dual role, for instance, they are the beneficiaries of their organization's internal CSR policies and they represent their company towards other stakeholders in their role as part of the business. This dual position clarifies their critical role where the human resources are viewed as the most valuable asset of the firm (Pedersen, 2009). However, most existing research on CSR gives emphasis on consumer perception (Lee and Jackson, 2010) and employees as a unit of analysis have received limited attention in the past CSR literature (Rupp et al., 2006). Therefore, this study fills this gap by focusing on employees' perception towards CSR initiatives of firms.

The greater part of the past research on social responsibility focuses on empirical findings from Western or European contexts, regardless of the growing number of empirical studies on social responsibility in developing countries, there is an absence of adequate research to explain the status of CSR initiatives in emerging economies. Therefore, the current study explores CSR initiatives of an Ethiopia brewery industry from the employees' perspective. Moreover, the Ethiopian beer production and market have

shown a tremendous transformation in the last five years through expansion of existing facility as well as building the new ones as a result of increasing of the demand of beer consumption due to rising income, favorable demographics, and increased urbanization. Such explosion of the beer market and boost in production could lead a hand to other sector's development through backward and forward economic integration. Economic growth, and therefore also prosperity, is ultimately determined by the productive and innovative capacity that companies possess. However, economic growth alone is not enough to generate and optimize prosperity and well-being; to achieve those goals, economic growth needs to take place with due consideration for the impact on the environment and on social circumstances. To this end, the question as to the present condition of CSR initiatives in the industry remains unknown and requires further examination. Keeping this in mind, this study was designed to examine the perception of employees toward CSR initiatives of the brewery industry in Ethiopia.

The research questions explored by the gap are listed as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of employees on CSR initiatives of brewery firms in Ethiopia?
2. How the demographical factors of employees such as age, gender, education, work experience and position influence their perception toward employees, customers, community and environmental aspect of CSR initiatives of the Ethiopian brewery industry?

II. Literature Review

Several definitions of CSR entail corporate engagement with society, referring to one process by which a company states and develops its '*corporate culture*' and '*social consciousnesses*' (Rupp et al, 2006). To be integrated enough to the present context of discussion on stakeholder has a lot of information supplementing to the research. Stakeholder approach to CSR has got currency and offered a new approach to organize thinking about organizational responsibility (Jamali, 2008). The rationale for using a stakeholder approach invariably affects or is affected by business organization and therefore, can be seen as imposing different responsibilities. Moreover, Clarkson (1995) contends stakeholder approach is more useful for the analysis and evaluation of corporate social performance (CSP) than other approaches based on concepts of social responsibility and responsiveness.

Stakeholder theory and CSR

The relationship between business and society explicitly define by Carroll is widely accepted by academics. Carroll (1991) argued that there is a natural fit between the idea of CSR and an organization's stakeholder. Wood (1991) also asserted that the basic idea of CSR is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities; therefore, society has certain expectations for appropriate business behavior and outcomes. In relation to this, CSR aims to define what responsibilities that the business ought to fulfill, the stakeholder concept addresses the issue of whom business is or should be accountable to, and both concepts are clearly interrelated (Kakabadse, et al., 2005). However, while the CSR concept still suffers from a level of abstraction, the stakeholder approach offers a practical alternative for assessing the performance of firms as well as the key stakeholder groups.

Currently, stakeholder theory is the most common idea of conceptualizing and understanding the issues concerning CSR (Wood, 1991). The stakeholder concept has been utilized as an important driver explaining corporate involvement in CSR (Post, 2003). Stakeholder theory argues that business can be understood as a set of relationships among groups which have a stake in the activities of that business (Visser, et al., 2007).

A strong reason behind why firms are motivated to invest in the CSR program comes from the domain of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Post, 2003). Stakeholder theory asserts that corporations should be motivated not only to pursue profit maximization, but also other multiple objectives (Pirsch et al., 2007) by meeting the needs of the company's different stakeholders; thus, corporations should manage and coordinate the various competitive and cooperative demands of stakeholders (Ruf et al., 2001; Freeman, 1984).

Stakeholder proposes that CSR issues involve the entire stakeholder (Bird et al., 2007), managing divergent and conflicting interests among them (Riordan and Fairbrass, 2008). Different components of corporate CSR performances target different stakeholder groups (Pirsch et al., 2007) and the result of their CSR performance is constantly reassessed by various stakeholders (Riordan et al., 1997). Therefore, stakeholder theory provides a theoretical and practical useful framework for studying and evaluating CSR (Lamsa et al., 2008).

In a nutshell, stakeholder theory hence provides a new avenue to organize thinking about organizational responsibilities. By recommending that the needs of shareholders cannot be met without satisfying to some extent the needs of other stakeholders, it turned attention to considerations beyond direct profit maximization. In other words, even when a firm seeks to serve its shareholders as a primary concern, its success in doing so is likely to be affected by other stakeholders (Foster and Jonker, 2005; Hawkins, 2006). Based on this theory, many companies embrace a corporate social responsibility program as a means to promote socially responsible actions and policies, and effectively respond to stakeholder demands (Maignan and Farrell, 2004). The primary agenda for success should be managing the relations with all the organization's stakeholders. This requires a detailed understanding of to whom exactly a firm is responsible and the nature of those responsibilities. In this study, stakeholder approach to CSR is used as a basis for collecting and analyzing CSR data and it serves as a framework for empirical studies from the employees' perspective. To this end, the researcher utilized four key dimensions of CSR including environment, local community, customers, and employees.

III. Research Methodology

Measurement of employees' perception on CSR initiatives was performed by examining primary data source needed to collect data to determine the respondent's level of agreement on the given set of survey questionnaire provided to them. A quantitative method was appropriately applied with a clear definition of research issues and the questions asked to respondents lead to concise answers. Thus, the data collected was interpreted for drawing conclusions on the perception of CSR initiatives based on a five point Likert scales. Responses were coded from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with 3 signaling indecision.

The research design of this study was basically cross-sectional, sought to gather data only at the time of the survey, which was analyzed through quantitative methods. Survey questionnaires were utilized to assess employees' perception toward CSR initiatives to determine their levels of agreement on the given parameters. A descriptive and inferential statistical method was used to analyze the questionnaire survey. For the analysis of quantitative data, the researcher utilized SPSS version 20.

Various sources of information were used to generate 47 items of the CSR. The samples utilized in this study were drawn based on convenience. The participants have been working more than a year within the organizations as full time employees and attended at least technical and vocational education (TVET) programs were selected. The five major brewery firms which have been running for more than ten years in the operation were identified and included in this survey study, such as BGI Ethiopia, Meta Abo Brewery (Diageo subsidiary), subsidiaries of Hieneken (Harar Brewery, Bedele Brewer), and Dashen Brewery.

After the questionnaires were thoroughly reviewed, five hundred twenty five (525) copies were sent out as planned. Four hundred twenty nine (429) copies were fully completed and valid. A total of 96 (18.29%) questionnaires were invalid due to errors or incomplete responses or unreturned.

IV. Results and Discussions

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

As shown in the Table I, among 429 respondents, the majority (71.1 %) of respondents was male. The majority of employee respondents (56.8%) were working less than 6 years. The majority of respondents (53.7%) were aged from 26 to 35. Those respondents who attended (Technical and vocational Education) TVET program were 31.7%, 33.8% of them hold diploma, and 34.5 % attended 1st degree and above. In relation to the respondents' position in their organizations, employees from the lower position were 64.3%, the majority of the respondents.

Table I: Demographic profile of respondents (N=429)

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	305	71.1
	Female	124	28.9
Age	18-25	111	25.9
	26-35	228	53.7
	36-45	75	17.5
	Over 45	15	3.5
Education	TVET	136	31.7
	Diploma	145	33.8
	1 st degree and above	148	34.5
Year of experience	Less than 6 years	244	56.8
	6 to 10 year	126	29.4
	Above 10 year	59	13.8
Position	Senior	39	9.1
	Middle	114	26.6
	Staff	276	64.3

Source: survey result

4.2 Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation and Alpha Coefficients

Generally, the inter-correlations among all the variables demonstrate the discriminated validities. Although the correlations among the variables are significant, their correlations are not high. This suggests that the questionnaire items in the variables are not measuring the same construct. The alpha coefficients of employees, customers, local community and environmental aspects of CSR are above 0.70. Thus, there are relatively high internal reliabilities in these scales. The result of this study also reveals that there is statistical relationship between CSR toward employees, CSR toward customers, CSR toward community and CSR toward environment; and overall CSR perception at significant level of 0.05.

Table II: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation and Alpha Coefficients

CSR dimensions	Mean	Std. Dev	CSR toward employees	CSR toward customers	CSR toward Community	CSR toward Environment	CSR Rating
CSR toward employees	3.33	0.83	(0.919)	-	-	-	
CSR toward customers	4.11	0.68	.488*	(0.85)	-	-	
CSR toward Community	3.83	0.75	.577*	.768*	(0.903)	-	
CSR toward Environment	3.93	0.70	.497*	.762*	.760*	(0.885)	-
CSR Rating	3.80	0.63	.771*	.810*	.905*	.897*	(0.871)

Note: Mean is a composite score of the items for the construct; Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

() - Alpha Coefficients

Based on the result from the Table II, higher perception was discovered toward customers aspect of CSR (mean=4.11), Environmental aspect of CSR (mean=3.93), and Local community aspect of CSR (mean=3.83). In this case, firms give the most attention to customers in their pursuit of CSR. This would be through providing goods and services hallmarked by quality and care, safe products, rights to all relevant information about the product and ethical advertising. This notifies that the CSR initiatives of firms are mostly associated with customers' right. Likewise, environmental aspect of CSR is also given high attention as perceived by employees. This conveys that CSR initiatives are also associated with protecting environment. Community aspect of CSR is ranked third and companies are doing well in this area through sponsorship activities (for instance supporting local sports, culture or arts events); making infrastructure investments in roads, water systems, schools or hospitals; launching community development activities and encourage their employees to participate in community projects; and providing financial support to social and other non-commercial community projects; and so on. Employees' aspect of CSR is considered as the most significant stakeholder group with whom corporations have to practice their social responsibility. Social responsibility toward employees must go beyond the terms and conditions of the formal contract of employment. Organizations need to come up with broader expectations that today's employees are for the quality of their work life. Such expectations encompass caring touch of the employee's welfare and safety at work, upholding their skills and motivation for the work. Beyond these expectations, a socially responsible firm secures a fair treatment and equal opportunities for all its employees without considering gender, age, race, or religion. However, Employees aspect of CSR (mean= 3.33) was given the least attention by the brewery firms as perceived by the employees themselves.

The result of the present study is inconsistent with the finding of Tariku (2011) as found different that Food processes and Beverage Industry (FPBI) in Ethiopia accords the most attention to employees, shareholder, community, environment, supplier and customers.

4.3 Gender and perception of CSR

Table III shows that the relationship between gender and employees aspect of CSR is significant at the level of 0.05. This means that the perception towards this aspect of CSR is influenced by gender. Therefore, female respondents (mean=3.59) have higher perception than male counterparts (mean=3.22). The relationship between gender and perception toward customer, community and environmental aspect of CSR is not significant. The overall rating of CSR perception is significant based on employees' gender variation at the level of 0.05. Such a gender difference in terms of CSR is coherent with Panwar et al. (2010), which indicates that males and females differ in terms of their perception of the social responsibilities. Burton and Hegarty (1999) found females are more likely to rate higher on scales of ethics and social responsibility than males. Similarly, Smith et al. (2001) found females indicate more attention to corporate ethical responsibilities than males. Moreover, Marz et al. (2003) indicated Females have a significantly higher level of social orientation than males.

Table III. Gender and perception of CSR

	Female		Male		F-ratio	Sign.
	mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Responsibility toward employees	3.59	.82	3.22	.82	18.88	.000
Responsibility toward customers	4.17	.65	4.08	.69	1.39	.239
Responsibility toward Community	3.89	.70	3.80	.76	1.59	.207
Responsibility toward Environment	3.94	.62	3.92	.73	.050	.823
CSR Rating	3.90	.58	3.75	.65	4.712	0.031

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.4 Age and perception of CSR

The relationship between age and perception towards employee's aspect of CSR is significant at the level 0.05 as shown in Table IV. The age group of "45 and more" has the highest mean (4.06) which indicates that older people have higher perception towards employees aspect of CSR initiatives than younger

generations. The relationship between age and perception towards customer, community, environmental aspect of CSR is not significant. This means that perception toward these aspects of CSR is not influenced by age differences. The overall rating of CSR perception is not significant based on employees' age variation. The finding of this study is consistent with the results of other studies (Gholipour et al., 2012; Eweje & Brunton, 2010), not finding a significant and coherent evidence of age differences in CSR attitudes, perceptions and expectations.

Table IV. Age and perception of CSR

	18-25		26-35		36-45		Above 45		F-ratio	Sign.
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	Mean	SD		
CSR toward employees	3.42	.91	3.19	.74	3.45	.93	4.06	.41	7.203	.000
CSR toward customers	4.11	.69	4.11	.58	4.06	.95	4.20	.27	.222	.881
CSR toward Community	3.87	.67	3.79	.70	3.82	.98	4.07	.65	.843	.471
CSR toward Environment	3.85	.68	3.93	.63	4.00	.94	4.07	.40	.889	.447
CSR Rating	3.81	.62	3.76	.56	3.83	.84	4.10	.37	1.635	.181

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.5 Working Experience and perception of CSR

Table V depicts the relationship between working experience and perception towards both employees and environmental aspect of CSR which is significant at the level of 0.05. More experienced people (above 10 years) have higher perception (mean=3.68 and 4.11) towards both employees and environmental aspects of CSR respectively than less experienced. The relationship between working experience and perception toward customer and community aspect of CSR is not significant. The overall rating of CSR perception is significant based on employees' period of employment. The finding of this study is in accordance with the finding of Changchutoe (2012) which found that private company employees who are having different periods of employment have different level of perceptions and expectations toward CSR.

Table V. Working Experience and perception of CSR

	Less than 6		6 - 10		Above 10		F-ratio	Sign.
	Mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD		
CSR toward employees	3.29	.86	3.23	.81	3.68	.70	4.27	0.006
CSR toward customers	4.06	.67	4.11	.67	4.26	.72	2.28	0.079
CSR toward Community	3.84	.75	3.71	.70	4.01	.83	2.39	0.068
CSR toward Environment	3.84	.69	3.96	.65	4.14	.80	5.28	0.001
CSR Rating	3.79	.65	3.75	.60	4.02	.60	3.78	0.011

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.6 Educational background and perception of CSR

As it is shown in the Table VI, the relationship between educational background of the respondents and perception toward employees, customers, community and environmental aspects of CSR is significant at the level of 0.05. The figure shows that more educated people (having degree and above) have better perception than less educated. In addition to this, the overall rating of CSR perception is significant based on employees' educational background. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Agrawal et al. (2015) stating that educational background as a demographic factor significantly

influences the employee's perception of the social and ethical behavior of their firm. The finding of this study also confirms the results of prior studies, which found that educational level can determine perceptions and attitudes toward CSR (Quazi, 2003; Sobczak et al., 2006).

Table VI. Educational background and perception of CSR

	TVET		Diploma		Degree & above		F-ratio	Sign.
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD		
CSR toward employees	3.26	.91	3.21	.83	3.50	.73	5.10	0.006
CSR toward customers	4.18	.63	3.95	.64	4.19	.73	6.12	0.002
CSR toward Community	3.86	.73	3.68	.73	3.94	.76	4.88	0.008
CSR toward Environment	3.93	.65	3.81	.73	4.04	.70	4.05	0.018
CSR Rating	3.81	.63	3.66	.63	3.92	.61	6.27	0.002

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.7 Position and perception of CSR

A result depicted in Table VII shows that employees' position in their organization do influence their perception on employees' aspect CSR initiatives of firms with statistical significance at the level of 0.05 (sig= 0.001). However, the relationship between position and perception towards customer, community and environmental aspect of CSR is not significant. The overall rating of CSR perception is significant based on employees' position variation. Those employees in the highest position perceived better than lower positions on both employees' aspect of CSR and the overall CSR rating. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Stawiski et al.(2010) and Changchutoe (2012). According to them company employees in different position have different level of perceptions toward CSR. Those at the highest levels in the organization have the most positive impressions of their companies' CSR initiatives.

Table VII. Position and perception of CSR

	Top level		Middle level		Lower level		F-ratio	Sign.
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD		
CSR toward employees	3.70	.83	3.44	.71	3.23	.86	7.08	0.001
CSR toward customers	4.20	.92	4.16	.69	4.07	.63	1.16	0.316
CSR toward Community	3.99	.90	3.83	.83	4.10	.63	1.19	0.305
CSR toward Environment	4.07	.86	4.01	.72	3.87	.67	2.46	0.870
CSR Rating	3.99	.72	3.86	.66	3.74	.60	3.53	0.030

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

V. Conclusions and Implications

The researcher identified four groups as key stakeholders (customers, employees, local community, and the environment) and delineates relevant CSR activities against each cluster. The study, therefore, reported that Ethiopian brewery firms accord the most attention to customers in the pursuit of CSR, moderate attention to the environment, local community and limited attention to employees' stakeholder and concludes that the overall perception of CSR initiatives of brewery firms was high. The study suggests that companies that choose to implement CSR approach must emphasize on employees' aspect of CSR first and other stakeholder groups afterwards since the success and failure of firms, including CSR implementation are largely depended on the commitment, and motivation of employees. Therefore, the needs of employees must be satisfied before satisfying other stakeholders.

This study contributes to previous research on the practical aspects of CSR by highlighting the influence of demographic factors on the perceptions of individuals, including gender, age, year of work

experience, level of education and position. Thus, this study concludes that gender, year of experience, level of education, and positions hold in the firms have influence on the perception of employees toward the CSR initiatives of brewery firms but not age differences.

VI. Limitations/Future Research

The study uses only employees as a unit of analysis; future research can extend the survey to other stakeholders to evaluate their perspectives. The study identifies only four stakeholders (employees, customers, local communities, and environment) in which the brewery firms are responsible for. But the future research can extend to include other stakeholder groups such as government, investors, suppliers, NGOs, civil organizations etc. The current study is limited in its scope to brewery firms. Therefore, future studies may include other alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverage industries. The sampling technique utilized also limits the generalizability of the current study.

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